since part of this region is covered with volcanic soils, it has excellent wines. 134 241

The northwestern part of Transdanubia is the most intensively farmed area in Hungary. Some parts of this area are sandy.

The meteorological conditions of the Carpathian Basin combined with a variety of soils offer rich and varied products to the inhabitants. 132 The Great Plains have a typically continental climate. The yearly precipitation is 500-600 mm. With a yearly average temperature of only 10 centigrades (due to the frequent -30°C winter colds), the amount of sunshine reaching this area in the summer equals that of the French Riviera. There is a relatively large number of hours of sunshine (1,900-2,000 annually on the Great Plains) which gives to the crops greater resistance to parasites, increases their power of germination and facilitates storage and transportation. The climate of Transdanubia constitutes a transition between the continental climate of the lowlands and the more coastal climate of the West European countries.

The chief crop in Hungary is wheat, and cereals in general. Corn 243 production equals that of wheat and is used primarily for fattening stock.

Good quality tobacco is being produced on some 8,000 acres of [249] Hungarian soil, especially in sandy areas.

243 Hungarian soil, especially in sandy areas. The production of rice was before 1945 only in an experimental stage. In the post-war period, the government's extensive irrigation program and favoring of rice has resulted in a now increasing rice yield coming from approximately 50,000 cadastral [249] acres. Sugar beets provide Hungary's sugar.

245 At present, vineyards cover 800,000 cadastral acres and produce
274 world-famous wines. The yearly output of the wine industry is 3-4 million liters of wine with an average alcoholic content of 11-14.5 per cent. Hungarians are the sixth largest wine consumers in Europe, averaging 38 liters a year per person.

244 Vegetables are grown throughout the country, with certain regions specialising in particular crops. Nagykörös furnishes most of the cucumbers, Kalocsa and Szeged pepper and paprika, and Mako is the center of garlic and onion production. Tomatoes come from the regions of Budapest, Hatvan, Kecskemét, Nagykörös and Kaposvár. The yearly production of excellent (5.5 per cent sugar content) tomatoes amounts to approximately 7,000 FREIGHT CAR loads.

245 The long summer sunshine gives to Hungarian fruit an almost unsurpassed quality. The following chart shows the pre-war number of fruit

Then we start the real work in the fields. About eleven the women-folk take their baskets, cover them with a kerchief, put the baskets on their heads, and proceed to the field. They take lunch to the men-folk. The baskets are big. They are covered because our women-folk are proud. The baskets under the kerchief generally contain a soup-bowl, but more often than not this bowl is empty. Nevertheless, the women bring them out, and the men have their chunks of bread in their left hand and, squatting on their hams, they spoon with their right hand the soup which is not there. We are foolish people. We are ashamed in front of each other. We are ashamed at not having any soup. For many centuries we have pretended to eat the imaginary soup, and still we have not given up the pretence. Proudly the women carry the baskets out to the fields in a solemn procession, balancing them beautifully on their heads. And the baskets contain a chunk of bread, an empty bowl, the spoon-for-pretence, and sometimes an onion, a green paprika, or a gherkin. 512

And you can often see the men, after they have eaten the non-existent soup, wipe their lips and moustaches with the back of their hands, and even emit a satisfied grunt.

The procession of women arrives at the fields about noon. The wives squat beside their men and watch them eat. They eat even less. There is half an hour for lunch and rest, and then work starts again.

The work is heavy. We are not. If we get a chance to complain to the overseers who urge us to work, who are never satisfied with us, we say:

"How can we work faster, how can we do more, when there is so little weight on us?"

Because, to tell you the truth, we are always hungry. Our ambition would be to put on more weight if possible, to be fat like the overseers or the estate management staff.

You have never tried to work for hours and hours in the scorching sun with the heavy Hungarian scythe and falx, cutting the rough stalks of maize and wheat. 243● 512

We do this some nine or ten hours a day. The men are in a line and have to move very fast because the overseers and foremen are watching and our women and girls come behind us to gather up what we cut down. Our arms, our whole body, move in great sweeps, like those of the golfers in the parks of our lords when they want to hit that tiny white ball. This sweeping movement—with more power behind it—we have to make many thousand times a day. The women-folk have to stoop, gather, bind—stoop, gather, bind, again and again, for many hours.